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# DARTH MAUL

## Book I, Part III

*Jedi Padawan Eldra Kaitis is the prisoner of profiteering gangster Xev Xrexus. Xrexus has gathered the most dangerous crime bosses in the galaxy to participate in a nefarious auction to purchase the Padawan.*

*Little does Xrexus know, Sith apprentice Darth Maul has infiltrated the auction. With a group of bounty hunters – including Cad Bane and Aurra Sing – Maul plans on purchasing or kidnapping the Padawan. Maul plans on kidnapping the Padawan, and then killing her, in order to satiate his desire for vengeance against the Jedi.*

*But Maul's Master – the mysterious Darth Sidious – has forbidden Maul from interacting with the Jedi. Maul operates in secrecy, knowing that he will face severe punishment if Sidious discovers his disobedience....*


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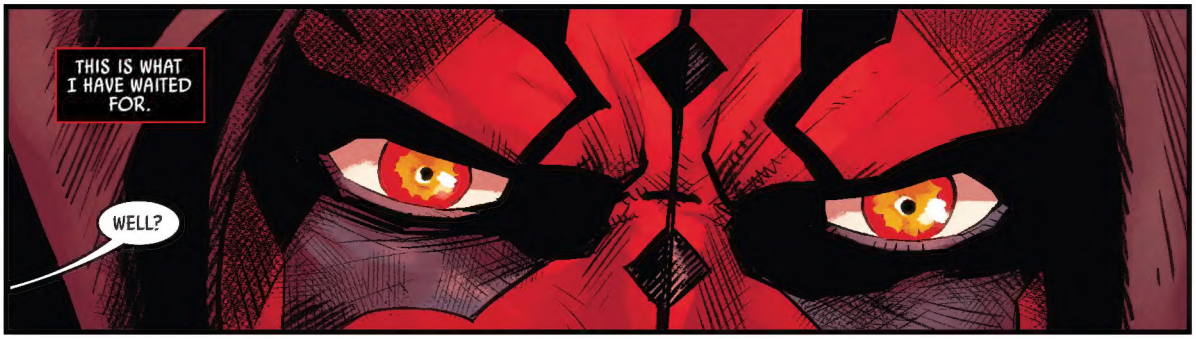
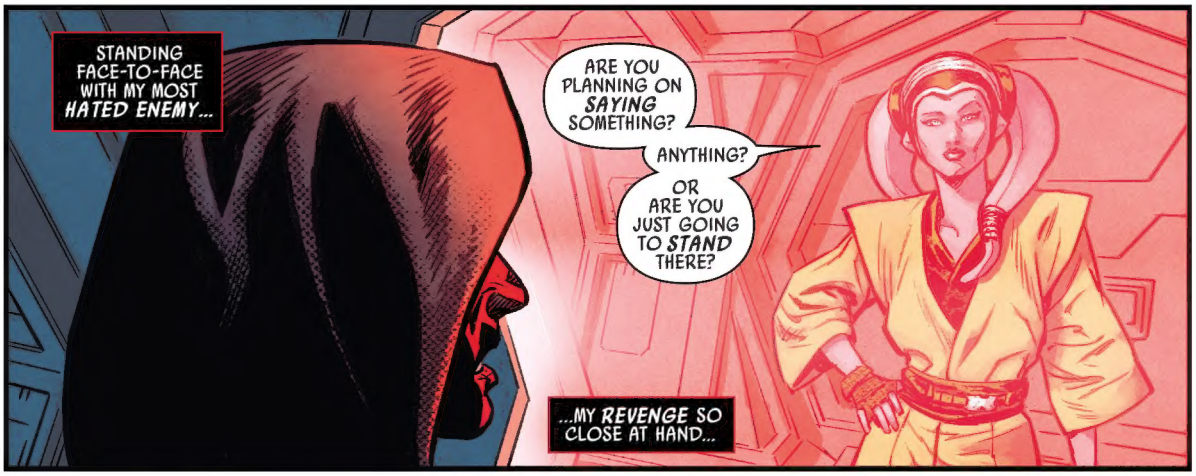
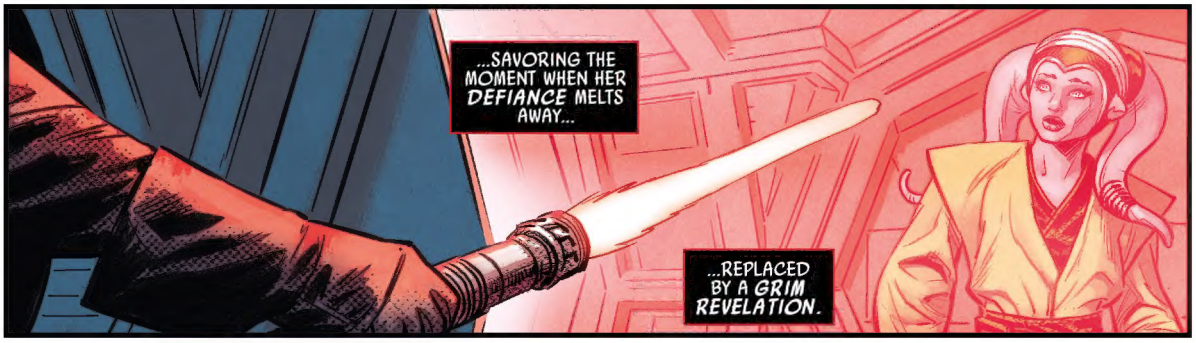

THIS IS WHAT I HAVE WAITED FOR.
WELL?


STANDING FACE-TO-FACE WITH MY MOST HATED ENEMY...
ARE YOU PLANNING ON SAYING SOMETHING?
ANYTHING?
OR ARE YOU JUST GOING TO STAND THERE?
...MY REVENGE SO CLOSE AT HAND...

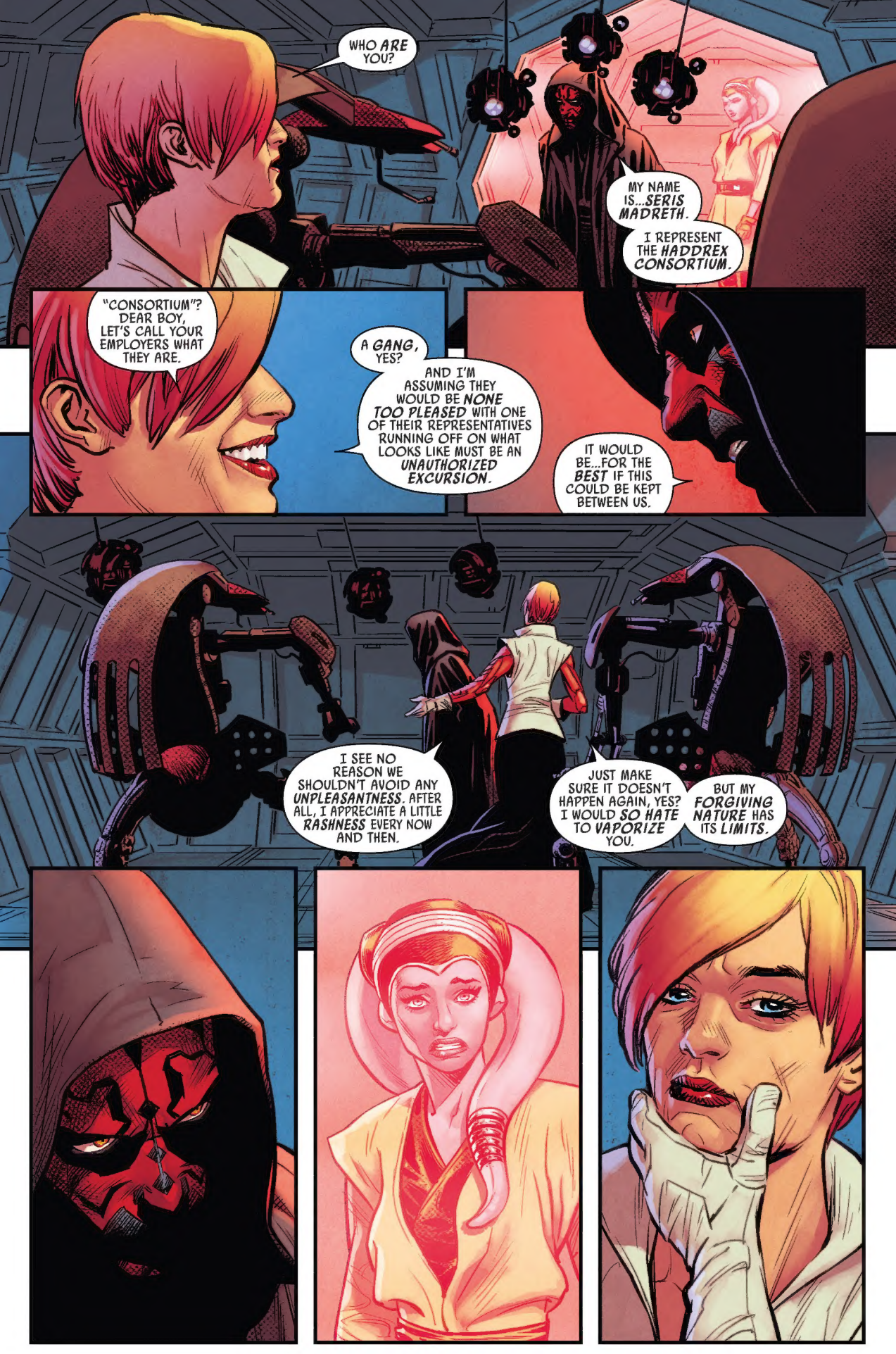

...SAVORING THE MOMENT WHEN HER DEFIANCE MELTS AWAY...
...REPLACED BY A GRIM REVELATION.

SHE DOESN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND WHO IT IS THAT STANDS BEFORE HER...
ZRAAK!
PAFF!
ZRAKT!
WHO...
...WHAT ARE YOU?
...BUT COLD FEAR UNCOILS WITHIN HER. SHE UNDERSTANDS ON A PRIMAL LEVEL--

--THE SITH HAVE RETURNED.

CLASSIFIED VOICES

TUT-TUT. OH, TUT-TUT.
I'M AFRAID THIS IS AN EGREGIOUS VIOLATION OF PROTOCOL.
YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED HERE.
THIS AREA IS STRICTLY OFF-LIMITS, BUT I'M SURE YOU KNEW THAT.
MY... APOLOGIES.
MY ACTIONS WERE RASH, I KNOW.
BUT I SIMPLY HAD TO SEE THE PADAWAN FIRSTHAND BEFORE THE AUCTION BEGAN.
RASH, INDEED.
MY OTHER GUESTS WOULD BE OH-SO-DISAPPOINTED IF THEY KNEW THAT ONE OF THE OTHER BIDDERS WERE AFFORDED SOME PRIVILEGE THEY WERE NOT.
AND I DON'T THINK ANYONE WOULD WANT TO DISAPPOINT CLIENTELE OF THIS CALIBER.
IT'S SIMPLY BAD FOR BUSINESS.


WHO ARE YOU?
MY NAME IS...SERIS MADRETH.
I REPRESENT THE HADDREX CONSORTIUM.
"CONSORTIUM"? DEAR BOY, LET'S CALL YOUR EMPLOYERS WHAT THEY ARE.
A GANG, YES? AND I'M ASSUMING THEY WOULD BE NONE TOO PLEASED WITH ONE OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES RUNNING OFF ON WHAT LOOKS LIKE MUST BE AN UNAUTHORIZED EXCURSION.
IT WOULD BE...FOR THE BEST IF THIS COULD BE KEPT BETWEEN US.
I SEE NO REASON WE SHOULDN'T AVOID ANY UNPLEASANTNESS. AFTER ALL, I APPRECIATE A LITTLE RASHNESS EVERY NOW AND THEN.
JUST MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN, YES? I WOULD SO HATE TO VAPORIZE YOU.
BUT MY FORGIVING NATURE HAS ITS LIMITS.

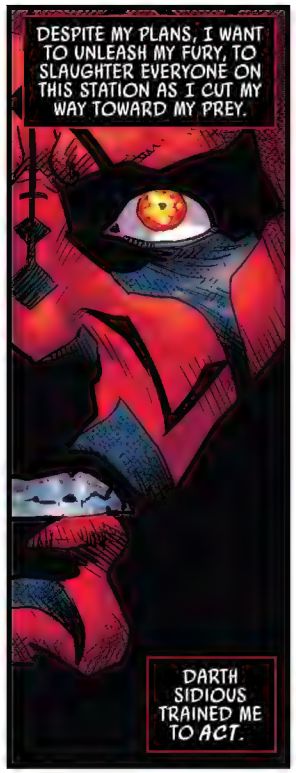
PATIENCE, THEN.
ALWAYS PATIENCE.
MY MASTER...IF HE KNEW ABOUT MY PLANS...WOULD LIKELY FIND THIS AMUSING.
I'VE RUN THE CALCULATIONS, AND I'M AFRAID YOU WILL NOT BE PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS.
BASED ON THE FUNDS WE HAVE ON BOARD...
KEEP TALKING, DROID.
...AND COMPARED TO APPROXIMATIONS OF THE FUNDS THE OTHER BIDDERS WILL HAVE AVAILABLE...
...THE PROBABILITY OF OUR PLACING THE WINNING BID IS BARELY WORTH MENTIONING.

MY FORMER MASTERS HAD NO INTENTION OF PURCHASING THE JEDI PADAWAN.
THEY HOPED TO RAID THE AUCTION...TAKE THE PADAWAN...AND ROB THE OTHER GUESTS WHILE THEY WERE AT IT.
THAT'S MESSY BUSINESS.
NOT THAT THIS ISN'T MESSY ENOUGH AS IT STANDS.
THE HADDREX GANG NEVER SHIED AWAY FROM A SCRAP.
THEY WERE STUPID... BUT FUN.
THAT'S NOT OUR SORT OF GAMBIT, THOUGH, IS IT, BOSS?
WE COULD TRY TO KIDNAP THE GIRL IN A BLAZE OF BLASTER FIRE... OR RAZE THIS SPACE STATION AND EVERYONE ON IT...
...BUT THAT LEAVES TOO MANY VARIABLES...
...AND YOU WANT TO GET AWAY CLEAN.
AS CLEAN AS OUR BACKUP PLAN WILL ALLOW.
BACKUP PLAN?
I DON'T DARE TO HOPE THAT I'LL BE EXCLUDED FROM THIS ENDEAVOR, DO I?
BRIGHT DROID.
SO WHY DON'T YOU REVISIT THOSE CALCULATIONS OF YOURS...
...AND TELL US WHO'S GONNA BE THE LUCKY WINNER?

ANXIOUSNESS... ANGER...HATRED...

...FLOWING THROUGH ME...

...STRONG ENOUGH THAT THOSE AROUND ME--EVEN THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE FORCE...



500,000!

YOU DON'T NEED ME ANY LONGER.
WHY NOT JUST LET ME GO?
AW, THAT HURTS MY FEELINGS.
WE'RE ONLY JUST GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER.
NOW-- SHUT UP.

750!
900!
1 MILLION CREDITS!
1.5 MILLION!
2 MILLION!

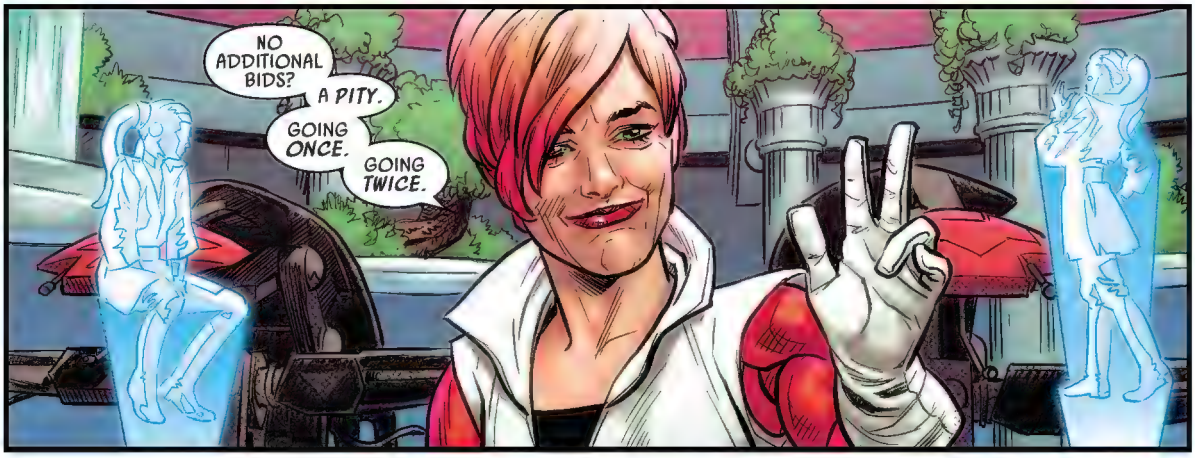
ALL RIGHT, LADIES.
LET'S INTRODUCE OURSELVES TO OUR FRIENDS ON BOARD.
BUT NO BLASTERS.
THERE'S NO NEED TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SHIP.

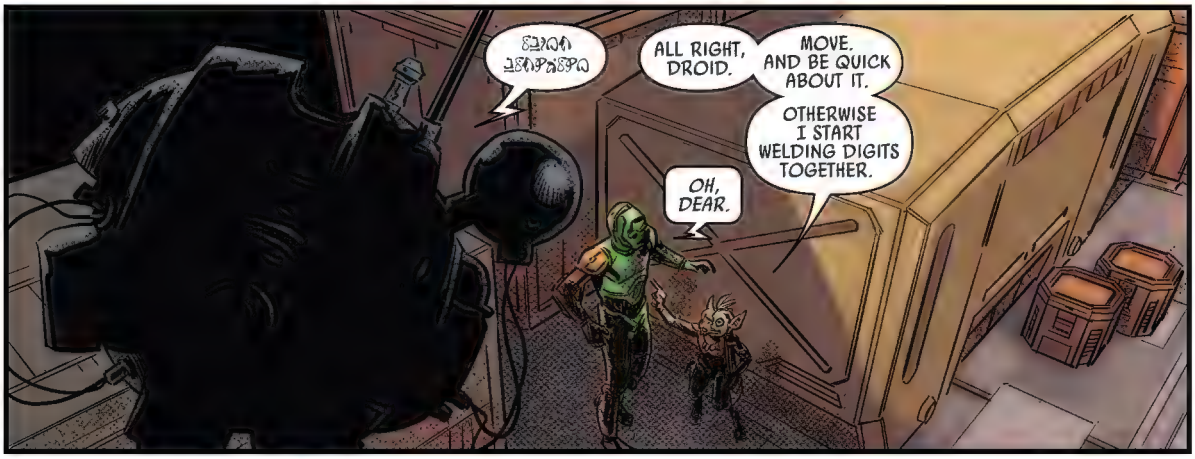
I BID 2.5 MILLION CREDITS!

NRRRK!

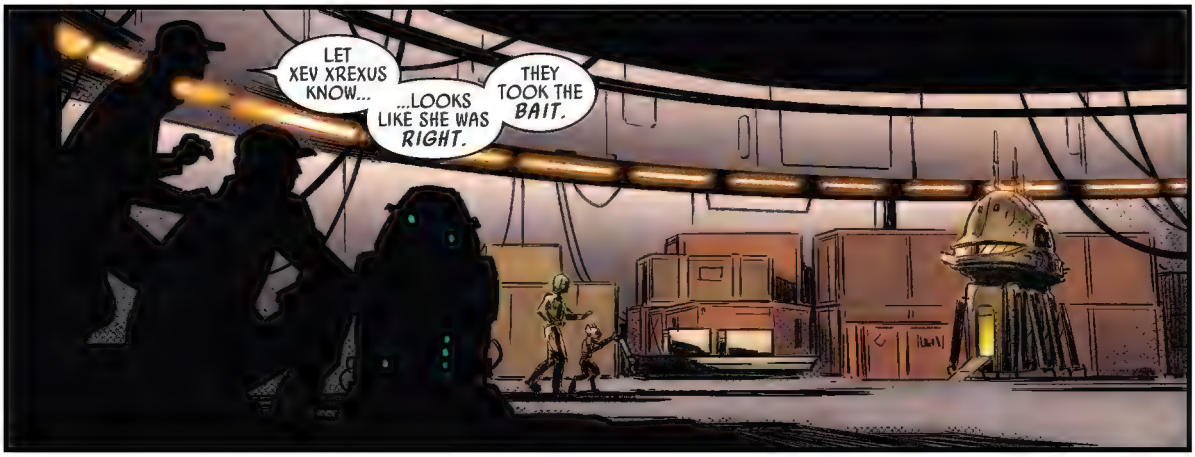
I HAVE A BID OF 2.5 MILLION FROM JEE KRA.
I SHOULD REMIND YOU ALL THAT THE PADAWAN'S WEAPON--THE FABLED *LIGHTSABER* OF THE *JEDI*--IS *INCLUDED* WITH THIS PURCHASE.
DO I HEAR A BID OF 3 MILLION?

AND YOU SAID THE HADDREX GANG LIKED TO GET MESSY.
*FEH.*
TELL TEK-TEK TO GET IN HERE--*FAST.*


NO ADDITIONAL BIDS?
A PITY.
GOING ONCE.
GOING TWICE.


ALL RIGHT, DROID.
MOVE. AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT.
OTHERWISE I START WELDING DIGITS TOGETHER.
OH, DEAR.

CONGRATULATIONS, JEE KRA!


LET XEV XREXUS KNOW...
...LOOKS LIKE SHE WAS RIGHT.
THEY TOOK THE BAIT.

THE SHIP HAS BEEN PREPPED, YES?
YES, JEE KRA.
EXCELLENT.
I WANT TO LEAVE AT ONCE.
XEV MIGHT BE THROWING A PARTY TO CONSOLE THE LOSING BIDDERS...
...BUT I HAVE MY PRIZE.
BOTH MY PRIZES.
CAREFUL WITH THAT LIGHTSABER.
I'D HATE TO SEE YOU BURN YOUR OWN FACE OFF WITH IT.
YOU HAVE PLUCK! I LIKE THAT!
YOU SHOULD BE GLAD ONE OF THE OTHERS DIDN'T WIN THE AUCTION.
I SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE DONE WITH A PADAWAN.
MAKE NO MISTAKE, THOUGH...
...I HAVE MEANS OF TEARING SPIRIT AND RESOLVE AWAY FROM MY PRISONERS...
...AND I'M SURE--
WHAT?
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT YOU MIGHT GET AWAY WITH THIS?
DID YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOU COULD JUST PURCHASE A JEDI PADAWAN AND WALK AWAY WITHOUT REPERCUSSIONS?
LET'S SEE HOW CLEAN WE GET THROUGH THIS.
DID YOU THINK I WOULD ALLOW SUCH A TRANSGRESSION?
WHO ARE YOU?
AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW--
THE DOOR!
THEY'RE SEALING US IN!

MMMPH!
HGGGK!
THE FORCE?

THE ROBE!
IT'S CONSTRICTING!
SMOTHERING HIM!
LEAVE HIM!
HE'S GONE!
THE SAME GOES FOR ALL OF YOU.
MAYBE FOR ALL OF US, TOO.
I KNOW WHO HE IS...
...WHAT HE IS...

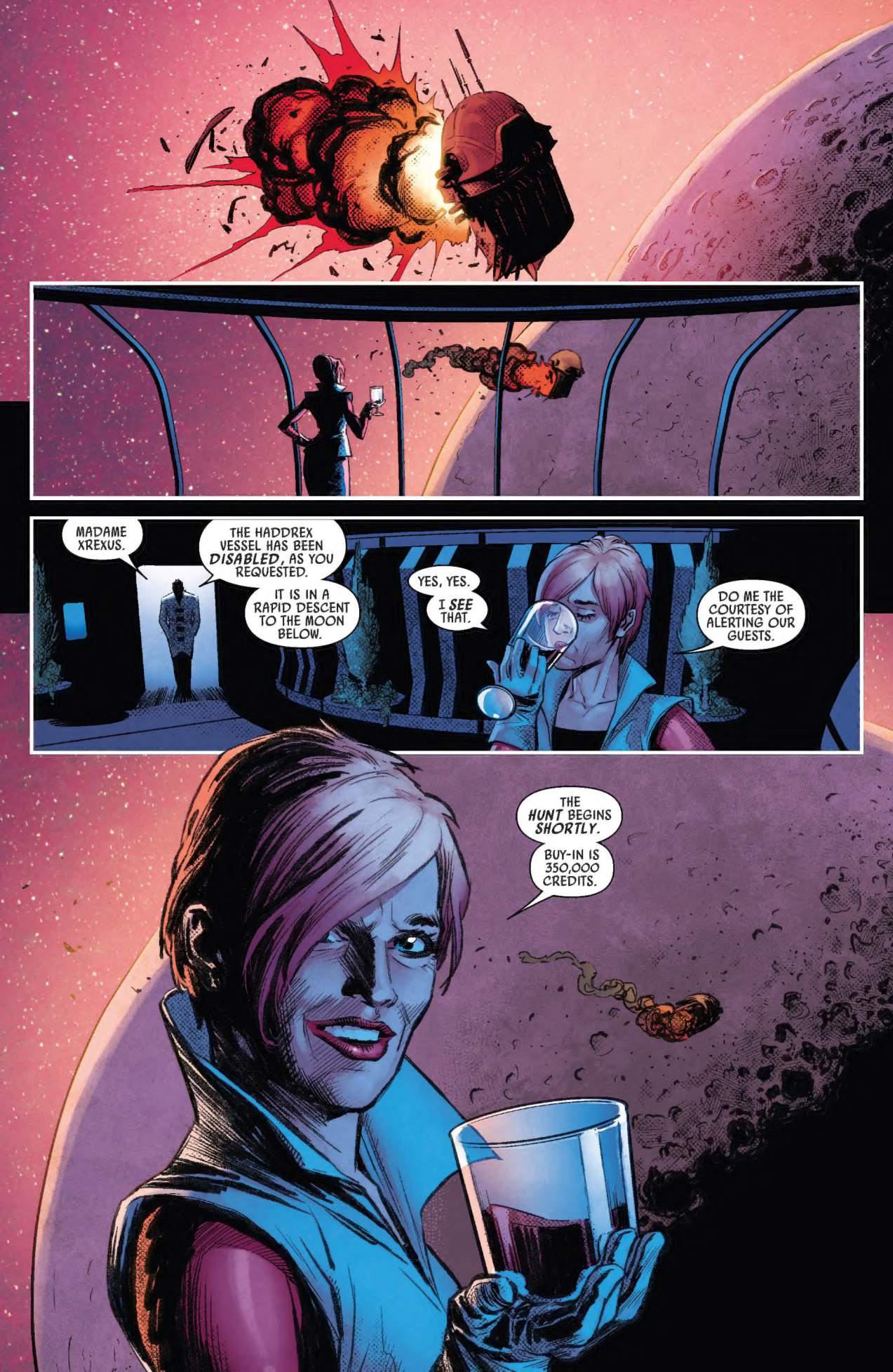
YOU...
YOU ARE--
YOU KNOW NOTHING!
NOTHING ABOUT WHO I AM!
NOTHING ABOUT WHAT I WANT!
I KNOW I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU.
I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO HIDE WHO YOU REALLY ARE FROM THE SCUM YOU'RE WORKING WITH.
EVEN WHILE YOU WERE FIGHTING JUST NOW.
DESPITE ALL THE JUMPING AND KICKING, WHAT YOU REALLY WANTED TO USE WAS--
WE'RE LEAVING.
GET US INTO SPACE BEFORE WHAT WE'VE DONE HERE IS DISCOVERED.
WHATEVER YOU SAY... BOSS.

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME, YOU--
AS YOU WISH.
UNF!
YOU... YOU'RE A SITH, AREN'T YOU?
I'VE HEARD RUMORS...SINCE I WAS A YOUNGLING... BUT I DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE REAL.
OF COURSE NOT.
YOU PRAYED YOU WOULD NEVER STAND BEFORE YOUR NIGHTMARES MADE FLESH.
YOU THINK YOU SCARE ME?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO IS LURKING IN THE SHADOWS...KEEPING WHO YOU REALLY ARE A SECRET.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S SCARED.

FAR ABOVE, FAR BELOW.
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE WE'LL FALL.
FAR ABOVE, FAR BELOW.
WHAT ONCE WAS GREAT IS RENDERED SMALL.
NO OFFENSE, BUT I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR NURSERY RHYMES.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, GET ON WITH IT.
BETTER YET--
--TAKE THESE BINDERS OFF ME AND HAND ME MY LIGHTSABER.
WE'LL SEE HOW ALL THAT SPINNING AND LEAPING HELPS YOU AGAINST AN EQUAL--
YOU ARE NOT MY EQUAL!
NO JEDI CAN MATCH MY SKILL, MY FURY, MY RIGHTEOUSNESS!
AND-- TRUST ME, MY DEAR--I WILL CUT YOU FREE.
I WILL HAND YOU THIS LIGHTSABER.
AND THEN I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE.

YOU SEEM PRETTY RELAXED, HONEY.
I THOUGHT YOU HAD DOUBTS WHEN IT CAME TO OUR EMPLOYER'S INTENTIONS.
I DO, AURRA.
JUST NOT A LOT I CAN DO ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW.
WE NEED TO GET OFF THIS SPACE STATION.
WE NEED A SAFE PORT BEFORE WE CAN CUT TIES--ONE WAY OR THE OTHER--WITH MAUL.
"ONE WAY OR THE OTHER."
YOU THINK WE'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM.
NO SUCH THING AS EASY MONEY.

WHY DO WE ALWAYS GET STUCK WITH CARCASS DUTY?
LEAVE ME ALONE, YOU NUISANCE.
GET OUT OF MY FACE OR I'LL JAB YOUR CYBERNETICS OUT--
OH, DEAR.
MR. TEK-TEK...YOU MIGHT WANT TO LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY.
I'M AFRAID WE MIGHT BE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
WAIT--WHAT DO YOU MEAN "THERE'S A COUNTDOWN"?
GET OUT OF MY WAY AND LET ME TAKE--
BRACE YOURSELVES!
TAKE COVER! GET--


MADAME XREXUS.
THE HADDREX VESSEL HAS BEEN DISABLED, AS YOU REQUESTED.
IT IS IN A RAPID DESCENT TO THE MOON BELOW.
YES, YES.
I SEE THAT.
DO ME THE COURTESY OF ALERTING OUR GUESTS.
THE HUNT BEGINS SHORTLY.
BUY-IN IS 350,000 CREDITS.

DARTH MAUL
NEXT ISSUE: